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NATHANAEL EMMONS.

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THE religious situation in New England at the death of Jonathan Edwards in 1758 presented grave problems and difficulties, the solution of which was imperatively demanded if Calvinism was to retain its ascendancy over the popular mind and conscience. Arminianism, with its doctrine of the freedom of the will, it was clear, if this were once admitted to be true, must resolve into an empty formula every distinctive tenet of the Calvinistic faith, whether that of eternal decrees—or election and reprobation—or that of original sin, or of perseverance in grace. It likewise struck at the very corner-stone of the old theology—the dogma of the divine sovereignty. Edwards had seen with unflinching vision that the only method to be pursued which could hold out even a suggestion of ultimate victory for the “standing order” was to resist to the bitter end every advance and attack from the Arminian line. From the first, therefore, he had refused to make concessions. On the contrary, he had asserted the principles of Calvinism in their most extreme form, for it was his firm conviction that when thus presented their logical consistency must be such an appeal to the human reason as should be irresistible.

In all this, however, Edwards was but following the course which Calvinism had taken wherever, from the moment it arose, it had been able to prevail. For the theological system of the Genevan reformer had instinctively recognized in Arminianism the reappearance within the pale of religion of the old humanism, with the literary and historical spirit of which it could have no sympathy. Then, too, humanism seemed to have been identified with immorality, and the Reformation of John Calvin was, beyond all else, in the interest of order and discipline. Other types of reform, as that of Luther, might remain indifferent to the humanistic movement, or even quietly allow its influence to

make itself felt in the work of Christianity; while Zwingli and the Church of England might openly bid it welcome as an ally; but Calvinism was bound in the nature of the case to seek the destruction of humanism as incompatible with the will and glory of God.

That was an hour fraught with serious issues for the future of religion in New England when it was determined—as had not been done elsewhere in the Christian world—that the task to be undertaken was to render Calvinism impregnable to the assaults of the reason by carrying it out to its logical conclusions. The result was that as a system of thought it reached a harshness and barbarity which are almost incredible; a result, too, from which we have not yet recovered, which may still be traced in the religious attitude of the New England people. Jonathan Edwards had been able to silence his opponents, but he had failed to convince them. It was a critical condition, from which no way of escape immediately appeared. Edwards, however, was destined to be followed by a succession of powerful thinkers whose mission it should be to seek and afford an answer to the inquiries of the time in the spirit of their great predecessor, and thus develop what is known as the Edwardian theology. Conspicuous among these was Nathanael Emmons, whose career covered the latter part of the eighteenth century and nearly all of the first half of the nineteenth.

Having graduated from Yale College in 1767, at the age of twenty-two, Emmons became in the following year the theological pupil of Dr. Smalley, of New Britain, Conn., a man of great independence of mind and a follower of the New Divinity. In his early religious experience at college, Emmons had rebelled against Calvinism and had been inclined to adopt Arminian principles. But he had read Edwards's *On the Will* with delight, and, when he came to Dr. Smalley's, felt that he was secure in the earlier type of New England religious thought. His teacher, however, opened to him other aspects of theological problems, and these he accepted because they appeared to commend themselves to his mind and heart alike; for it is to be remarked as not without its significance for all his after-thinking

that the process of conversion and the adoption of the new theology should have gone together in Emmons's experience. He never ceased to present his theological system as not only intellectually faultless, but as the very power of God unto salvation. In 1773 Emmons was ordained to the vacant parish of Franklin, Mass., and there he remained as pastor and preacher for more than half a century, and as student and thinker for nearly seventy years, or until his death in 1840. The type of New England theology which he had come to adopt, and in which he made slight changes, was that known as Hopkinsianism, the system of Dr. Samuel Hopkins, of Newport, R. I., the man who had first come forward to meet the questions raised by Edwards's teaching. But Emmons was no servile disciple; his was a mind pre-eminently independent, and all his theological conceptions, however they might agree with those of any of his predecessors, came from his intellect bearing the impress of his own genius and character; while the background in which they were set and the form of their presentation gave them fresh power. Furthermore, he and all those who constituted what may be termed the Edwardian succession had learned from Edwards that theology was a progressive science; that, while great advancements had already been made, still greater heights were waiting to be gained. This principle Emmons thoroughly accepted. The demand of the age, likewise, was for change.

Whenever the call for a change in theology has come, the temptation has usually been to find the way of settlement in the denial or surrender of some part of Christian truth; though the leaders of the movement have not always thought of their labors in that light, but rather as a search for what they have been pleased to name "the simplicity of Christianity." This is the case today, for the present, like the Hopkinsian period in New England, is an age of transition, and so of the trial and ferment which necessarily accompany the process. There is a theory now abroad—and one by no means limited to circles outside of ecclesiastical organizations—that the essence of Christianity lies in its ethical system, and that, while in the past

the church has had its governmental and theological moments, it is now to be chiefly concerned with conduct. But it is one of the lessons of Christian history that man is to realize the redemption which has come to him in the wholeness of his nature; not merely in his moral, but in his intellectual being as well. This is the position which the New England theologians represented. They believed that there may be and must be right thinking in religion; that to separate between thought and action is to injure the spiritual life of man; nay, more, is to strike it a fatal blow. For this reason they would withdraw no portion of what they conceived to be revealed in Christianity as being not only precious but indispensable to the deepest needs of the human soul, not to mention that it was the sacred law of God which no profane hand might safely touch. Hence their labors are worthy of our attention, however we may regard the particular changes which they effected as they went forth to their work of molding Calvinism into a firmer and more thoroughly unassailable system.

In view of developments which have since appeared, it is with peculiar interest that we note the rejection by Dr. Emmons and the entire Hopkinsian school of the dualism in the divine nature between justice and love, the principle which had been so strenuously maintained by Edwards, and indeed was a characteristic of original Calvinism. It was now asserted that the essence of Deity is love, and that this extends to universal being. Here was a great step forward in the conception of God; but for the present it served only to raise new problems, for the doctrine of endless torment still remained, that doctrine of an everlasting torture-house to which God had consigned from all eternity the vast majority of the race. Could so awful a procedure be chargeable upon a God whose nature is wholly love? To this question no satisfactory answer could anywhere be found. Emmons sought for it in the contention that the divine law which reflects the nature of Deity is so holy that any, even the least, transgression must be deserving of unending punishment. But this was only an attempt to remove to the shoulders of sinners the burden of what has been forever predetermined in their

case, an attempt which must prove futile, since the dogma of decrees had not been relinquished even for a moment. After all, when we look behind the plea, the government of the world had not passed from the hands of the God of Calvinism, whose formal definition had been changed, but whose character was still the same, who had not altered in his purposes for men.

A great problem of the age was that of the mystery of the existence of evil. There is no portion of Christendom where this ancient difficulty has received so much serious attention as among the Calvinists of New England. In its effort to render itself consistent, Calvinism forced the question upon the religious consciousness, and became bound to obtain an answer because of its method of dealing with human sin. Emmons used the expression, without fear or hesitation, that God is the source of evil, that in the case of the transgressor God stands behind the criminal and moves him to his crime. He reasoned that this must be so, since God is the universal and only efficient cause. It is clear, however, that he felt that the situation stood in need of an apology; for he affirmed that sin is an occasion of great good to the universe, making a distinction between occasion and means, as if, were he to describe it as the means, men should feel relieved of responsibility and should glory in their wickedness. But, unlike Edwards, it was not the method of Emmons to discover man's sin in the garden of Eden. We do not derive a heart destitute of good from our first parents; our evil heart is our own. It was his famous dictum that "sin consists in sinning." Sin does not lie in an evil nature, or principle, antecedent to choice; it is man's own act, for which he is directly accountable to God.

There was another hard problem of the period, which had weighed on men's minds for half a century, the end of which seemed to be in sight if such an idea of sin were taken as the starting-point. It was the question of how the inward change known as conversion could possibly be accomplished if, as Jonathan Edwards had argued, with what were apparently conclusive reasons, the human will possessed no creative power and could not control or reverse its inclination, whether toward

good or evil. But if humanity can be held responsible for sin, and if, moreover, it is true, as Emmons taught, that it is not only possible but easy to do God's will, that the terms of salvation have been made as low as men can ask, and that natural ability is equivalent to moral obligation, then the problem no longer exists; then, too, the preacher need not hesitate to exhort men to turn at once from sin to holiness, nor to accuse them of increasing their guilt every moment that they delay to respond.

The Franklin divine thus endeavored to meet the growing Arminianism—and in this he was following the footsteps of Hopkins—by taking to himself its doctrine of human free agency, while never entertaining a doubt on the Calvinistic proposition of the divine sovereignty. If it seemed to some that Emmons was about to pass over to the camp of the Arminians, he reassured them by his emphatic assertion that whatever there was in man, of good as well as of evil, was due to the controlling will of God. These appear like a succession of flank movements undertaken with a view to the recognition of human freedom. But, however thoroughly Emmons might believe in the freedom of the will, and however anxious his quest for its demonstration, or vigorous his statements in its defense, the doctrine could by no possibility be reconciled with that of the divine sovereignty. He had succeeded only in bringing the two principles into juxtaposition. He had no idea of an organic relation between the divine and the human; nor could he, in the face of his premises, establish such a relationship. The human will was one with the divine when it had denied its own power and had come under the domination of Deity. But this was only to obliterate the will of man, not to raise it to the realm where is the attainment of moral character. If this were the case, it was vain to talk in the same breath of the capacity of the creature to choose between good and evil, and of the predeterminations of the eternal mind. The contention was not a contribution to theology, however much it looked that way. That the will of God is supreme, and has fixed, by a decree as of fate, the everlasting condition of every man, but that nevertheless the human will is

freely to come into union with the divine—there could be no more glaring contradiction than this. Dr. Emmons denied the contradiction. When asked to explain himself, he replied that the truth lay in the combination of two extremes. It was not that he was dishonest or insincere, but rather as if he had anticipated the modern view, while it was yet too early to possess its wider outlook, and before the demand for a re-examination of the postulates had become irresistible, a demand which we may well believe his large spirit would gladly have conceded. He rejoiced in the Arminian language on the freedom of the will. It seemed to him that the Calvinists had captured the stronghold of the enemy who had long threatened them with destruction. Now he has the right to occupy both territories, the Calvinistic and the Arminian. He can pass from one to the other in safety. Today no one can go beyond him in his assertion of the absoluteness of decrees, and the next he is proclaiming human liberty as had never been done before. In the last analysis, when we come to examine the position, it is as if he had thought that the true glory of the finite lies in the fact that its little life provides, so to speak, one more opportunity for the expression on the part of the Infinite of his restless and unfathomable spirit. The finite is, as it were, like the tiny bays and inlets by the seashore which serve as channels into which the vast, deep ocean may empty a portion of its eager waters when it comes rushing and upheaving along by the force of the tides, and cannot be kept back. But whatever its poetry or its mysticism, the theory allows to man no significance in and for his own spiritual life; the human will is either unable to win for itself a sphere distinct from the divine, or has been altogether swept out of existence. In this regard the fatal logic of Edwards remained unshaken.

But our chief interest in the theology of Emmons and the other Hopkinsians lies in its doctrine of disinterested submission, or, as it is commonly known, “a willingness to be damned for the glory of God.” This principle had been established in the first instance as a test of the soul’s love to God—so that a man might make it the supreme proof of his devotion to declare his readiness to be damned in case God’s love to the universe

should require it. Emmons's own peculiar contention on the subject was not so much that sinners should be willing to be lost as that they should be willing to have God's decree fulfilled; they should submit not so distinctively to their endless ruin as to the will of God which ordains that ruin.

There was an element of mysticism in Emmons which eagerly responded to a doctrine that shocked his own age, and which men now can hardly discuss with patience. He always spoke of it as lofty, pure, ennobling; to his mind it stood for all that is most sacred in the inner life of the spirit. He supposed that his was the principle of the French mystics of the sixteenth century, who also had proclaimed the unconditional love of God. He read with approval Cowper's translation of Madame Guyon's poems which appeared in 1782, but he did not know the idea of God which was their basis. His mysticism, although not without relations of sympathy with the French school, went farther. It called for the utter annihilation of every holiest instinct of the heart, on the ground that thus alone could there be a new creature. But, dreadful and impossible as was Emmons's doctrine of disinterested submission, it is capable of an interpretation which does honor to the man; for it bears witness to his nobility of character, in that he was unwilling to separate himself from his fellow-creatures. If there were dangers to which others were exposed in the counsels of God, he, too, was prepared to meet them. He had planted himself on the conviction that, whatever the divine decree in his own case, no less than in that of any man, whether unto happiness or misery, that decree must be right; and he would not waver. Still, as suffering was not to be desired for its own sake, but only the will of God, he could hope for the best. It was this that prompted the pathetic utterance on his death-bed: "If I am not saved, I shall be disappointed." As it manifested itself in Emmons, the principle of disinterested submission appears even beautiful, like the inspiration of a noble soul which could not endure any stain of selfishness. But it was more. Astonished as its advocates would have been, could they have been told, their doctrine was the beginning of the end for the old

Calvinism which so long had kept men in its toils. It was the promise and the pledge of a better day for the religious life of New England; not altogether because men rose in rebellion against it, but rather because it was an effort, sublime in spite of its misapprehensions, toward the larger modern view of the high worth and capacity of human nature.

Wherever the Calvinistic theology has appeared in history, whether in its origin in St. Paul or later in Augustine, or in the mediæval reformer whose remorseless logic gave it a developed expression, and from whom it takes its name, it has stood for the divine transcendence. For this reason, and more especially since the New England theologians gave to the doctrine a deeper emphasis than it had yet received, it is difficult for us to discover how Emmons could have regarded it as bringing God near to man. The truth is that he had carried his theory of the divine will so far that it alone occupied the universe; hence he was able to argue that man could not flee from its presence. But this was to leave no room for human personality, that conception which the present age has found so inspiring. If individual character was to exist at all, it was to be made over into something not itself. It is said nowadays that it is comparatively easy in theology to bring forward the charge of pantheism; but surely there can be no question that here was a theology which was indeed a pantheism; for it burned with a fire that scorched and shriveled every form of thought and life with which it came in contact. Even Emmons himself, with all his natural independence of character and vigor of mind, as he sat in his study sixteen hours a day, meditating on problems which had no connection with the spiritual life, wearing a place for his feet in the floor beneath his table, and refusing to move for any secular duty, however urgent, did not wholly escape the fatal influence of his own doctrine. He was not altogether what he would have been in another age and under a different system. But the native strength of his inner life was too great to be subdued. The man himself was better than his theology, and his personality appears as it were the open diapason sounding below and above the mighty organ roll of his awful dogmas.

It is an illustration of how extremes in religion may sometimes meet that in its effacement of the free expression of individual spiritual life consistent Calvinism was in agreement with the principles of the Jesuits, though the system of Ignatius Loyola was inspired by a different motive from that which the New England theologians had in mind.

Though the rising Arminianism of his age, which was developing itself into the Universalist and Unitarian movements, disturbed Dr. Emmons, it did not take him unawares. He had seen what was coming almost from the beginning of his ministry and was prepared for the battle all the way along. In his sermon on "The Dignity of Man"—the title of which surprises us when we turn to it—preached in 1786, long before Channing arose to emphasize that truth and make it the basis of his theology, it seems as if Emmons had advanced by forced marches and was in possession of the field before the arrival of the enemy. But when we come to bring it into relation with his system, it is clear that the position is not that which was to form the mission of Channing. The sovereignty of Deity must always dominate; and human nature has its worth, not through any spiritual capacity, which is the impress of divinity, but only because it may subserve the arbitrary will of God. To the mind of Dr. Emmons the theory of the atonement held by Universalists seemed altogether at variance with the principles of a true theology. He was constantly seeking to demonstrate that it was false. To say that Christ had died for all, and that every man therefore may claim salvation for himself, appeared as a sure way to open the flood-gates to immorality, and, what was far worse, like an attempt to fetter the divine will, which must be free to save or to condemn as it chooses. It was impossible to tell whether or no the love of God had gone forth to a particular individual. That was a mystery the solution of which must wait until after death.

On the subject of Scripture there are expressions of Emmons which lead us to think that were he living today he could be in complete accord with modern thought. In the last analysis, when it is a question of the integrity of the Bible, appeal

is to be made to internal evidence rather than to prophecy or miracles. It is as if he were confident that the book is its own witness and bears the authority for its spiritual truth stamped upon its face. Here again, however, the man is not free, but is involved in contradictions through his allegiance to the principles of Calvinism. The theory of verbal inspiration binds him; therefore, wherever the statements of the volume are obnoxious to the reason there can be no real criticism, for to appeal from the Bible to the reason is to appeal from God to man. It is the argument which was unknown to Christendom until it arose on the continent of Europe in the sixteenth century, yet an argument with which we are strangely familiar, since by one of the contradictions of history it finds its reappearance at the present time in quarters where we could least expect it, where there is a richer heritage than is afforded by Calvinism: Inasmuch as the book is the utterance of the voice of God, its pages must be absolutely free from blemish; for, though it came through man, did not God speak through his soul as through a trumpet, and was not man passive in the process? To say, or even suggest, that historical Christianity has not known that or any similar theory; that the Bible itself bears another witness; that, because of the very fact that it is through men the Word of God has come, its statement is likely to contain some indications of the weakness of the human spirit, which in reality was not passive, but struggling in anxious fear and hope to understand and record the divine message, seems to these men to belittle its value, and, indeed, to deny that any sound has reached us. It is to no purpose that Christian people have at any moment looked to Calvinism, or to regions where its spirit and influence have obtained, for help in such an interpretation of Scripture as should be an unfolding of its truer meaning. But the pastor of Franklin was too large for his system; and it fills us with compassion to see how, when he appears to be standing at the door, as if about to go into a wider world, he at once turns and shuts himself again in the dungeons of Geneva.

Dr. Emmons passed his life within his parish, confined to his own reflections, satisfied with the postulates of John Calvin,

which he had decided from original research were the very principles of St. Paul. These seemed also to be exclusive in the doctrines of that apostle, and were regarded as one with the religion of the gospels. That that first of Christian thinkers, though among the greatest, might unconsciously have identified his own philosophical speculations with the divine discoveries of the Christ of God; or that there is more in his comprehensive writings than is included in the eighth and ninth chapters of the epistle to the Romans, was a suggestion which had never presented itself as the key which could unlock for him the door to the treasures of the New Testament, to the nobler and essential theology of St. Paul, and to the teachings of the Master as well. Emmons read widely on all sides; the books of Universalism and Unitarianism, and even of infidelity, were to be found on his shelves; but he could perceive no message in any of these which he could take home in loving self-application. For seventy years he labored to make Calvinism consistent, and the thought that it would some day be revealed that he had failed never occurred to his mind. He had no conception of how that same Arminianism, which to him was only vain and repulsive, was soon to change the face of the religious world. It is interesting to note in this connection that the parsonage at Franklin, as was the custom at the houses of distinguished ministers of that period, served as a theological school, one or two pupils being received at a time, and that during his long ministry Dr. Emmons trained nearly one hundred for their sacred work. No doubt this appeared to him to furnish a good guarantee for the utter discomfiture of Arminianism, and for the continuance of New England in the ancient paths, which it had been his work, as it were, to macadamize, and along which the people might now be led by men who had been instructed in every landmark. We know what were the thinkers and the preachers bred under him, but we may be sure that the young men, too, who came to Emmons as their teacher must have had brave hearts as well as strong mental powers to receive and retain so difficult a theology.

But if Emmons was great as a theologian and teacher of

candidates for the ministry, he was greater still as a preacher ; for it was in the pulpit that he made known what was in his mind and claimed the attention of men. All these questions and controversies in theology which we have been noticing were not written down in essays or treatises, but in sermons ; they were not sent out to the world through the press ; they were proclaimed to a congregation of parishioners from the pulpit of Franklin. Emmons had no ambition to appear as an author ; he would be only a preacher. Throughout a pastorate of extraordinary length he stood consistently for the power of the pulpit, as the place of appeal to the intellect and the conscience and of nurture for the spiritual life. In this respect he has a message for our own age. Nor could any call from without turn him aside. It was only with reluctance that he first consented to receive students of divinity into his household, lest they should claim too much of his time from his preparation for his work ; and when at one period he was talked of for the presidency of what was then the new theological school at Andover, he declined. While strangers often found their way to Franklin, attracted by the fame of the preacher, it was Emmons's delight to be the minister of his own people, and to see the second and even the third generation, who had heard his voice from childhood, succeeding to one another in their places in the pews. It was a happiness, too, of which he never wearied, to be the minister of a country parish. When we recall the subjects of his sermons, it appears all the more remarkable that they should have been preached to a rural congregation. Probably there is no portion of the Christian world where abstruse theological problems have received so much attention as in the pulpits of New England ; and certainly among these that of Emmons takes high rank in this regard. After Northampton, in no parish, whether town or city, even in New England, have hard topics of theology been so freely and fully sifted as in Franklin. It is said that the divines of Germany were astonished to hear of a congregation of farmers listening to sermons on themes which were being discussed by their greatest philosophers, by Fichte and Schelling and Hegel. But the farmers of New England rejoiced

in the discussion of those themes ; what they heard in church on Sunday serving as food for reflection and conversation during the week at the plow or in the hayfield.

Emmons did not give much time to the composition of a sermon. But its plan was mapped out with elaboration beforehand, so that he knew just how he intended it to move. He always took care that his mind should be full of his subject, and as he was a rapid thinker, so he wrote rapidly. Like all the great Calvinists of his age he was a logical preacher. If you admitted his premises, you must go with him to the end. It was his peculiar fashion, however, to state what his conclusions were to be at the opening of his discourse, and before he proceeded to develop his argument. When these were unusually offensive, his hearers were perplexed ; but this was what he wished, for it served the purpose of arousing their interest to see what practical lesson he would draw in what was called the "improvement." His homiletic method is well described in one of his own aphorisms : "The wise preacher will address the understanding before the conscience, and the conscience before the heart."

But Emmons's power in the pulpit was not due to any of the graces of an oratory which is readily effective. His figure was small and slight, and his voice so feeble that he could scarcely be heard. When we add to this that because of near-sightedness his manuscript was held close to his eyes while reading, thus rendering his face invisible and adding to the difficulty of hearing him, and that his delivery was without gesture and in a monotone, it is evident that it was none of the physical gifts or acquirements that sway great popular assemblies by which the people of Franklin were drawn to their meeting-house Sunday after Sunday, in storm and sunshine, for fifty-four years. But his was the soul of the poet and the prophet, and, in spite of the disadvantages under which he labored, he often rose to great heights of impassioned eloquence, thrilling himself and his hearers alike, particularly when he laid aside his manuscript, as was his practice, after reading some main division of his discourse, or preached wholly extempore. His theology, wrought out in lonely meditation and study, through the hours of the long

days, with the hook on the door that he might not be disturbed, it was manifest, when he appeared in his pulpit, had been fused in a flaming furnace. Even in the printed volumes the fire is not completely gone, but when we turn to them is found still burning. Yet it was not merely by flights of imagination, however lofty and spiritual, that Emmons reached and commanded his audience; it was fundamentally by the eloquence of reason. Then there was always the personality of the man himself, so strong and true, and the people's own interest in high religious themes. The preacher was able to give, and the people were glad to hear. All ages were represented in that congregation, thoughtful and expectant, when Emmons arose in his place; the young found his words helpful and inspiring in the temptations that beset them in the battle of life; and old men, who had grown gray under his ministry, still continued to listen with eagerness, bending forward in their pews to catch every syllable which fell from his glowing lips, as if all that they had heard in years that were gone were to them the promise and the pledge that now at last the very mysteries of God were to be unfolded in that pulpit.

As a pastor Emmons had the love and confidence of all his people. It was not his custom to make parochial visits, even in case of sickness waiting until he was asked to come; but his people called on him, his study serving as a confessional, where men and women made known their sins and perplexities, their fears and anxieties, or their trembling hopes of salvation, and the minister gave ghostly counsel and advice. In times of religious revival it was not uncommon to see many people at once sitting in the parlor waiting their turn to go into the study of their pastor. Dr. Emmons's manners were kind and gentle, and at home there was altogether a refined grace and dignity in his bearing, as if he had been bred at court; but he had lived so much by himself that when he went abroad he was ill at ease.

The theory of the church held by Emmons was that of original Congregationalism, or Independency: that the local church is complete in itself; that the Christian people of a community constitute the Christian church of that community, with

full power to determine its creed, to establish its ministry—which, inherent in the people, is derivable from them—and to administer discipline. From a study of the documents he had concluded that this had been the earliest constitution of the Catholic church. It was likewise his conviction that the local pastor contains in his own person all the offices and authority of the ministry of Christ's kingdom; that any form of that ministry, whether presbyterian or episcopal, as these have arisen in post-apostolic times, is a subdivision of the order of Christ and contrary to the New Testament; that each Christian minister is ordained to every function, both of presbyter and bishop, and even of archbishop. In the judgment of its friends, the clerical position in the system of Congregationalism has appeared the most modest ever devised; but the career of Emmons serves to illustrate the fact that there is a point of view from which it may be said that in its concentration in a single individual of the various powers and duties of the Christian ministry, which elsewhere in the church it has seemed wise to assign among the several members of a hierarchy, the Congregational polity has raised the parochial pastor to such a pinnacle of irresponsible authority as never was known before. It is as though men like Emmons had felt that the church's pastorate must in some way reflect the conception of the divine sovereignty, that there must somehow be a manifestation within the kingdom of heaven on earth of that direct and personal method in which God governs his universe; as if the establishment of gradations in the ministry, so that the congregation could not come into immediate contact with him who should be regarded as its supreme pastor, had been like the intervention of secondary forces or *logoi* between God and his people. Thus considered, it impresses us as if Congregationalism in one of its aspects had sought to revive in these modern days the mystical vision of St. Ignatius, to whose dim eyes the local bishop, seated on his throne, seemed in the place of Christ or God. Dr. Emmons allowed no one to encroach on the prerogatives of his office. His place was that of the teacher in the pulpit; the people were to sit below in the pews. He expected his congregation to be attentive to his

instructions. It is related that on one or two occasions, when the weather was unusually hot, seeing his hearers listless and indifferent, he stopped his sermon and sent them home, dismissing them with the remark that he must have a people who would give him their attention, or they could not have him for their minister, and that the church would remain closed until they had acknowledged their fault and promised amendment. This they hastened to do. Emmons always regarded and spoke of himself as in the fullest sense the bishop of Franklin, set for the direction of that see in all things spiritual and ecclesiastical. In the nature of the case he was supreme, and no layman ever thought of addressing him as "Brother Emmons."

The political opinions of Dr. Emmons, like those of most of the clergy of his age, were of the party of the Federalists. He was essentially an aristocrat in his tastes and feelings; the principles of democracy were to him obnoxious. He was especially opposed to the election of Thomas Jefferson, whose infidel sympathies seemed to him to strike at the very root of the moral life of the nation. Early in Jefferson's administration Emmons preached his famous "Jeroboam sermon," in which, though he did not mention the president by name, no one could mistake his meaning. He compared Jefferson to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, king of Israel. As Jeroboam's sojourn amid the idolatries of Egypt had made him a bitter enemy of the religion of Israel, so Jefferson had imbibed opinions antagonistic to Christianity from the writings of French philosophers during his residence in Paris. It was on the text: "And they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin." The comparison was unjust; but it is to be remembered that this was a time when preachers did not spare those high in authority in the state whose views they regarded as dangerous to the safety of the religious world.

There is one remark which perhaps may serve to close this presentation. All theological thought and work may be summed up as an effort to come to the knowledge of God; and that when done in the right spirit it is in the twofold recognition

that, on the one hand, that knowledge can never be completely reached, and, on the other, that it may ever grow and deepen. This was the mind of Dr. Emmons. He had no idea that he had exhausted what is to be learned of God; theology to him was a science which admitted of improvement and expansion. To that end he devoted his life, believing it to be a privilege, as well as a duty incumbent on the theological student and teacher. We today no doubt have a larger interpretation of the process; but some contribution to our opportunity was made by Nathanael Emmons, though not in the way for which he hoped and labored. There is a beautiful conception in his sermon on "The Blessedness of God": the divine happiness, he contends, is to go on increasing through all the ages of eternity. It may well be that it is the message of the great New England Calvinist to our own and to every age that man's knowledge of God here is to be as the joy of God hereafter, not bounded and perfected, but advancing into an ever wider and higher life.